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**The wanderer**

**Tara Sabharwal merges personal contemplations with childlike, lyrical paintings in bright hues**

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It is said that one becomes a true New Yorker only when one is constantly moving in and out of the city, never complacently settled in it," says artist Tara Sabharwal. As she walks around her paintings on display at the Art Alive Gallery in Delhi, she's also reflecting on her current status that has her shuttling between New York, London, Germany and India for shows. So the word "home" has many connotations — India, where she was brought up in Delhi and then attended art school in Baroda; London, where she completed her masters from the Royal College of Art and stayed on to paint as she got fellowships and teaching assignments; then moving on to New York in the 1990s to finally settle down; but still jet setting between cities... A German gallerist even titled one of her shows "London-New York- Delhi" — as one might an air- ticket!

Sabharwal's indecisiveness about her home actually transcends onto her canvases where she tries to validate or reason it out in multidimensional concepts. Her watercolour, gouache and cine cola works often bear titles like "Life's journeys", "Home in the clouds", "Separation swings", or etchings like "Rootless". The watercolour works are mostly multi-layered with high-density pigment inks that allow the richness of oil colours, paper cuttings glued and merged on the canvas, and gouache. The Japanese technique of cine- cole', working with rice paper, natural glue and transparent watercolours, is also frequently used, making them works of archival quality. "The texture and the surface tension of layers is very important for my work," says Sabharwal.

If watercolours allow Sabharwal the fluidity of the medium, the compositions of her paintings are equally fluid — the canvas busy with various elements that tend to trespass over each other—drawn with a childlike, whimsical hand that makes the paintings playful even if the ideas they propose are intense. The composition of the works often is of a fantasy world with houses hanging as gift packages from the clouds, jars (of memories) floating in the blue- green sea, or even a peep into the internal organs of the body. The prominence of nature —trees, flowers and leaves —is apparent. They often look like collages and sometimes the busy and bright canvases border on kitsch or pop art.

Sabharwal's introspective side about her personal situations finds its way on to the canvases, but also makes political observations — like a painting that has airplanes and tears with reference to the recent Gulf war. "I like to play with ideas of intensity

that exude a lyrical symbolism,” explains Sabharwal. If Sabharwal’s style wraps the seriousness of her thoughts in a playful style, she reasons, “It’s looking at issues from the heart rather than from the mind.”

Sabharwal confesses to being a colourist — giving her works a bright palette. “I meditate on the colours I’ll use,” she says, adding, “They reflect my emotional temperature.” She also thinks that the market of Indian art hasn’t been tapped fully yet as collectors are still mostly NRIs, even if foreign collectors are now viewing Indian works. “Indian art is yet to reach that “Indophile” status among art collectors,” says Sabharwal. Gallerist Sunaina Anand of Art Alive Gallery thinks that “Tara’s works are fresh, weaving stories with elements that •are lyrically put.”